

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims**

**Claims 1-34 (Canceled)**

Claim 35 (Currently Amended) A method of increasing abiotic stress tolerance in a plant, said method comprising transforming said plant with a recombinant vector comprising a polynucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 1 or a variant thereof coding for a polypeptide sequence as shown in SEQ ID NO: 2, and expressing the polynucleotide sequence or the variant thereof to yield transformed plants.

Claim 36 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein said plant used for transformation is selected from a group consisting of tobacco, rice and tomato plant.

Claim 37 (Currently Amended) The method of claim 35, wherein said method provides transformed plants having increased tolerance to cold stress relative to an untransformed plant of the same plant species.

Claim 38 (Currently Amended) The method of claim 35, wherein said method provides transformed plants having increased tolerance to drought stress relative to an untransformed plant of the same plant species.

Claim 39 (Currently Amended) The method of claim 35, wherein said method provides transformed plants having increased tolerance to salt stress relative to an untransformed plant of the same plant species.

Claim 40 (Currently Amended) A transgenic plant, plant tissue or plant cell produced by the method of claim 35, wherein said transformed plant, plant tissue or plant cell exhibits increased tolerance to cold stress relative to an untransformed plant of the same plant species.

Claim 41 (Currently Amended) A transgenic plant, plant tissue or plant cell produced by the method of claim 35, wherein said transformed plant, plant tissue or plant cell exhibits increased tolerance to drought stress relative to an untransformed plant of the same plant species.

Claim 42 (Currently Amended) A transgenic plant, plant tissue or plant cell produced by the method of claim 35, wherein said transformed plant, plant tissue or plant cell exhibits increased tolerance to salt stress relative to an untransformed plant of the same plant species.

Claim 43 (Currently Amended) Transgenic seeds produced by the transgenic plant of claim 40, wherein the seeds comprise the polynucleotide sequence.

Claim 44 (Previously Presented) Transgenic seeds produced by the transgenic plant of claim 41.

Claim 45 (Previously Presented) Transgenic seeds produced by the transgenic plant of claim 42.